

Even now, trade with this region is important. Our exports to the region exceed that with Italy and France taken together. And our two-way trade is equivalent to that with China and ASEAN combined.

One example of the potential of this market is canola. There is a \$100 million market in Mexico, our largest trade partner in the region. We have sent a mission to Mexico to seek to exploit this market.

In the oil and gas sector, nine Alberta companies will visit Venezuela in few days on a mission organized by my Department. There will also be substantial Alberta participation in similar missions to Mexico and Brazil later in the year.

Just last week, I hosted the largest delegation of Cabinet Ministers ever to leave Mexico. This unprecedented meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee examined ways to expand trade in a variety of areas.

In the future, we will expand our contacts with provincial governments in developing partnerships in trade promotion and participate in important regional trade fairs.

I believe Alberta is well-positioned to turn challenge into opportunity. The demand for our energy resources will increase; our agricultural expertise is world-class; our innovative high-technology sector is blossoming; and our human resources are rich in talent and ethnic diversity.

The future belongs to those who are willing to build upon the past, not simply to rely upon it. It is a future for traders. It is a future for Albertans.